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## **Arizona Water Initiative Cochise Planning Area Background and Mitigation Meeting Summary**

**Date:** April 19, 2016  
**Time:** 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM  
**Location:** Willcox Community Center – Main Hall  
312 W Stewart St  
Willcox, AZ 85643

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- a. ADWR Cochise Planning Area Coordinator Natalie Mast opened the meeting by welcoming stakeholders and describing the structure of the meeting.

### **2. Presentation: Cochise Planning Area Background Information from Strategic Vision**

- a. Ms. Mast presented an overview of the background information for Cochise Planning Area that was published in Arizona's Strategic Vision for Water Supply Sustainability (Strategic Vision).

### **3. Discussion Regarding Changes, Additions, and Updates to Background Information**

- a. At table groups, stakeholders discussed the information presented and then presented a brief summary of the table discussion to the larger group. Stakeholders proposed the following changes/additions:
  - o Water Supply – add map of aquifer boundaries, emphasize predominance of groundwater,
  - o Ecological Resources – add San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge, add endangered species considerations
  - o Other Background – add water levels, need for updated water use data, discuss option for voluntary and anonymous metering or reporting, increased number of index wells more evenly spread across area, improved timing coordination across well measurements, improved documentation of type of land index well is on
  - o Add category for Water Use Demand Sectors – Agriculture, Commercial (light and heavy), Industrial, Municipal, Environmental
  - o Include other communities – Bonita, Cochise, Elfrida, Sunsites, Dagoon, Sunizona, McNeal, etc.
  - o Land ownership and Use – Remove timber as a use in Coronado National Forest and replace with firewood collection, add agriculture as a use on State Trust Land, add

- recreation and hunting as a use on private land, add mining and rock quarries on new category of “Other Land”.
- Location of recharge – distinction between watershed/groundwater
- Existence of groundwater models
- Existence of priority for water uses – none existing
- Maps of subsidence and fissures

#### **4. Presentation: Summary of Previously Identified Mitigation Strategies**

- a. Ms. Mast presented a summary of strategies for conservation and overdraft reduction from the Strategic Vision and a listing of ideas that had been brought forth during the comment period of initial Cochise Planning Area Meeting on March 5, 2016.

#### **5. Discussion Regarding Mitigation Strategies and Additional Proposals for Strategies**

- a. At table groups, stakeholders discussed the information presented and then presented a brief summary of the table discussion to the larger group. Stakeholders presented the following changes/additions/considerations:
  - Regulating large agricultural users
  - Creation/inclusion of a map of subsidence and fissures and potential future sites of the same
  - Subsidies for rainwater collection/rain barrels
  - Investigation of current state law on creating dams on washes to create small reservoirs on private property
  - Agricultural conservation – recognition of need for this since agriculture is largest user, but also that much agricultural conservation has already been done
  - Divide focus of agricultural conservation between farmers and ranchers since water use patterns are different
  - Incentive based solutions
    - Incentive for recharge projects
    - To switch to more efficient irrigation techniques
  - Ability to buy or transfer groundwater rights
  - Industrial Conservation
  - Regulation of water use associated with mining operations
  - Geological information for “best place to drill wells”
  - Voluntary and anonymous metering/monitoring for more representative data
    - Stakeholder asked question regarding the logistics of anonymous metering/monitoring. Stakeholder who proposed the idea further clarified that the idea might be a voluntary sharing of well levels or use within a coarse map grid to encourage those who might be resistant to state-run metering to share some water information, which would assist in gathering more comprehensive data for the area.
  - Improving the distribution of index wells and associated data
  - Accounting for rural resident water demand (domestic well users) in projections since that is a large portion of planning area.
  - Alternative to current management tools – 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, or 5<sup>th</sup> option, just something in addition to current INA/AMA structure
  - Fund/subsidy for large farmers (in addition to small farmers or homeowners) to install “precision irrigation”
  - Better crop list based on climate and drought tolerance
    - Question regarding whether drought tolerant plant list idea would be regulatory. Group proposing the idea had discussed it being incentive-based rather than regulatory in nature.
  - Retiring “non-productive agriculture”

- Study of conservation methods used in other arid parts of the world
- Coordination of state and federal agencies on water-focused grants
- Education about these strategies and on the science of groundwater
- Local grassroots organization to lobby legislature

## 6. General Comment

- a. The following is an overview of comments received:
  - Stakeholder requested consideration of rainfall distribution and of how aquifer composition affects recharge, discussed variation between wells, difficulties of depending on statistical models, and expectation of wells eventually going dry
  - Resident requests consideration of number of acres in the basin, the amount of recharge, and the number of acres being farmed. There is an overdraft now, but average rainfall in last 15 years has been low, so overdraft has been worse than it might have otherwise been.
  - Stakeholder suggested making meetings more accessible, either through internet/webinar or making comments available through other means.
    - Natalie Mast responded that presentations and meeting summaries are available on ADWR's website and anyone is able to view those and submit any comments either through the website or to Natalie directly ([nlmast@azwater.gov](mailto:nlmast@azwater.gov)).
  - Stakeholder requested that information regarding surface water applications be included.
  - Stakeholder expressed appreciation for inclusion of Ecological Resources, and requested to add stakeholder of other species.
  - Stakeholder said that people attended the meeting because they're concerned about the issue, whether for or against regulation, and that realtors attended because there is a demand for land. Stakeholder further explained that demand for land here is because other places have not been proactive and those places have had water problems, and that he hopes to not see that area in same boat. Stakeholder discussed mention of grassroots local solutions, presence of three attendees at the meeting that were part of a committee trying to create local solutions, some pieces of which may be part of solution, and ultimate need for something to be done. Stakeholder clarified that not all will be winners, there will be some losers, but the goal is to find a solution that has more winners than losers.
  - Stakeholder asked question regarding the Department's strategy and next steps.
    - Staff responded that data and feedback from the day's meetings will be evaluated and expanded upon to figure out where focus and potential lies, with hope that further direction will be stakeholder and community-driven.
  - Stakeholder asked question regarding whether anything will be effective by the next political cycle.
    - Staff responded that Department doesn't take position on pending or proposed legislation, but there may be some solutions that come out of this process that can be driven by local stakeholders outside of the political process.

## 7. Closing Remarks

- a. Staff thanked group for attendance, participation, and feedback. Stakeholder contributions will be sorted through, and individuals will be notified by email when the next meeting is scheduled. Any questions or further feedback are greatly appreciated and can be directed to Natalie at [nlmast@azwater.gov](mailto:nlmast@azwater.gov) or (602)771-4646.